

April 3rd, 2025, concert
WMCT 2024
Career Development Award winner
Midori Marsh

with
Frances Armstrong
Rachel Szabo
Alex Hetherington

Artist Supporter
WMCT Foundation



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As a courtesy to others, please refrain from wearing perfume or other scents.
Please turn off cell phones and other noise-making devices.
No photography or recordings of any type during the performance.

*Please come and meet the artists on the stage or in the lobby
following the concert.*

Tuning Your Mind Lecture:
Nadia and Lili Boulanger
Kimberly Francis, Professor of Musicology, University of Guelph
Open to all, 12.15 p.m. sharp
Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

PROGRAM for APRIL 3, 2025

SISTER, SISTER

Bone Iesu, fons amoris
from *Concerti Sacri* op. 2

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani
(1602 - ca.1676-1678)

Soir païen

Philippe Gaubert
(1879-1941))

MALIBRAN AND VIARDOT

Il Mattino

Maria Malibran
(1808-1836)

Addio a Nice

La visita della morte

El corazón triste

Pauline Viardot
(1821-1910)

Cancion Espanola

Seguidillas de los oficialitos

---INTERMISSION---

NADIA AND LILI BOULANGER

Mon coeur

Nadia Boulanger
(1887-1979)

Versailles

Poème d'amour

Clairières dans le ciel

Lili Boulanger
(1893-1918)

Elle était descendue au bas de la prairie

Un poète disait

Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme

THEMES OF SISTERHOOD

Big Sister Says, 1967
from "*Love After 1950*"

Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Washing her hair

Daron Hagen
(b. 1961)

Empty Chair
from "*Songs for Murdered Sisters*"

Jake Heggie
(b. 1961)

Have peace, Jo
from "*Little Women*"

Mark Adamo
(b. 1962)

When we grow up
Lyrics by Shelley Miller

Stephen J. Lawrence
(1931-2021)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Midori Marsh, soprano; **Frances Armstrong**, piano;
Alex Hetherington, mezzo-soprano; **Rachel Szabo**, flute

Named a Top 30 Artist under 30 by CBC Radio, American-Canadian soprano **Midori Marsh** is quickly establishing herself as a “polished and poised performer” with a “truly gorgeous, expressive sound” (*Opera Ramblings*). In her debut as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Calgary Opera) Marsh was praised for “portraying the role with an intensity of emotion that dominated the stage” and “a powerful, darkly rounded, and flexible voice” (*Edmonton Scene*). In concert, Ms. Marsh was a featured soloist with the National Arts Centre Orchestra in works by Clara Schumann, joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra as the soprano soloist for Haydn’s *Creation*, and has been a two time guest soloist with Thorgy Thor and the Thorchestra (TSO, NAC). In 2025, she returns to Wolftrap for her second summer as a Filene artist, where she will appear in Mahler’s Symphony No. 2, *Carmina Burana* with the National Symphony Orchestra, and sing the role of Frasquita in *Carmen*. The previous summer saw her take on the role of Musetta in *La Bohème*. During her time as a young artist with the Canadian Opera Company, her roles included Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, the soprano soloist in Mozart’s *Requiem*, Annina in *La Traviata*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Frasquita in *Carmen*. She holds degrees from Laurier University and the University of Toronto. She’s a two time Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition Semifinalist, a Jensen Foundation prize winner, a Lotte Lenya finalist, and a first prize and audience choice winner of the Canadian Opera Company Centre Stage Competition.

Frances Armstrong, originally from Surrey, British Columbia, grew up in a musical family where she showed great promise in her piano playing from a young age. She holds a Master’s Degree in Collaborative Piano from the University of Toronto, where she studied with esteemed Canadian pianist Steven Philcox, and she also earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Piano Performance with Distinction from the University of Victoria. Frances studied a broad range of repertoire with internationally renowned artists at summer intensive programs such as the Franz Schubert Institute, Toronto Summer Music, and the Music Academy of the West. She also completed rigorous training as an apprentice coach at both l’Opéra

de Montréal, and the Canadian Opera Company. Frances is in high demand as a collaborator and coach across Canada, having worked at Edmonton Opera, City Opera Vancouver, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, and Highlands Opera Studio. She is known for her intuitive and sensitive playing, and she enjoys a diverse career as a performer, coach, and répétiteur. When she is not busy with music, she can be found enjoying a quiet life by the Pacific Ocean on Gabriola Island.

Praised for her "wonderfully rich, warm sound" (*Opera Canada*), mezzo-soprano **Alex Hetherington** was recently named one of CBC's "30 hot classical musicians under 30". She completed her tenure in the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio this past season. Recent operatic highlights include singing Mercédès in *Carmen*, Lapák in *Cunning Little Vixen*, First Handmaiden in *Medea*, and the Attendant in *Salome* with the Canadian Opera Company, Offred in *The Handmaid's Tale* at the Banff Centre for Arts, as well as premiering the role of Riley in *R.U.R. A Torrent of Light* with Tapestry Opera. Equally at home in concert repertoire, Alex has given performances with the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Victoria Symphony, Toronto Summer Music Festival, and the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In the coming season, Alex will be returning to the Canadian Opera Company to sing Siebel in their new production of *Faust*, as well as making her house debut with Vancouver Opera as the Stewardess in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*.

Rachel Szabo is a distinguished Canadian flutist known for a "rare sensitivity and virtuosic ease that captures audiences breathless" (Ulla Miilmann, Danish National Symphony Orchestra). Szabo has made guest appearances with the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra (Principal Flute), Danish National Symphony, National Arts Centre Orchestra of Canada, and Canadian Opera Company. She served as Acting Second Flutist for the Victoria Symphony during the 2023-24 season and holds Associate Member roles with the New World Symphony and Civic Orchestra of Chicago.

First Prize recipient at the 2016 Canadian National Music Festival (Open Woodwind Division), Szabo has also received the Payne-Lyon Prize of Excellence (2022) and the William Egnatoff Award of Excellence (2023) for her exceptional work as Principal Flutist with the National Youth Orchestra of Canada (NYOC). Additionally, she is

a Grand Prize Winner of the Kingston Symphony Association's Music Awards Competition. A graduate of the esteemed Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, Szabo has been named a Jacobs Scholar as a recipient of the Barbara and David Jacobs Scholar Award – a full four-year scholarship and the highest honour granted by the university. Szabo completed her master's degree at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, studying under Ulla Miilmann. Her performances have been featured on CBC Radio and the NYOC label.

NOTES for APRIL 3, 2025

Sisterhood is the overall theme of this program, and I am probably among the least qualified to write about the subject. What I can do, however, is fill in the background of the individual sisters, and some brothers, who composed today's music. Maria Cozzolani (b.1602) was the daughter of a wealthy Milanese family who entered the convent of Santa Radegonda, taking her final vows at the age of 18 with the religious name Chiara. She was very active in the musical life of the establishment and later became abbess and then prioress. The motet on today's program comes from a set of pieces published in 1642 under the title *Concerti Sacri*.

The French flute player, conductor and composer, Philippe Gaubert was active in Paris during the first half of the 19th century. He eventually held posts as professor of flute at the Paris Conservatoire and principal conductor of the Paris Opéra and the Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire. *Soir Païen* (Pagan Evening) is to a poem by Albert Samain and evokes barefoot nymphs, Pan with his flute, and the goddess Diana.

The two pairs of actual sisters on today's program provide fascinating contrasts, although there are some superficial similarities—both pairs were born into professional musical families, for example, with one of the two dying tragically young. Maria Malibran, daughter of Manuel Garcia, the nineteenth-century Spanish tenor, composer, teacher and impresario, made her singing debut in London in 1825 at the age of seventeen. Three years later she made her Paris debut and widespread fame quickly followed. George Sand said of her performance, "This woman ... is the foremost singer and the foremost tragic actress (in Europe)." A punishing performing career left little time for composition, but she published several songs and duets that received the praise of Rossini and Berlioz, among others.

Maria's younger sister, Pauline, received some singing instruction from her father but was initially trained as a pianist, with Liszt as one of her teachers. When Maria died from a riding accident at the age of twenty-eight, she concentrated instead on singing, now under the supervision of her mother, and had just as spectacular a career as her sister. In 1840 she married the writer, art critic, translator and director of the Théâtre-Italien in Paris, Louis Viardot. On a visit to St Petersburg in 1843 she met Turgenev, and a "unique and unconventional relationship" resulted—the exact nature is unclear, but he established himself in the Viardot household for some years. Her artistic circle included Clara Schumann, Brahms, Chopin and George Sand, and a number of composers wrote operatic roles especially for her. Although she never regarded herself as a composer, she left about one hundred compositions, including songs, operas, choral works and instrumental works. She also published a manual on singing based on her father's methods.

Nadia and Lili Boulanger, the other sisterly duo on today's programme, occupied a very different world from the Garcia sisters. Nadia lived from 1887 to 1979 and is known today, principally for her work as a teacher of composition. She became a student at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of ten and studied with Widor and Fauré, and privately with Vierne and Guilmant. In 1908 she entered for the Prix de Rome and was placed second. She continued to compose, but the following years were mainly devoted to performance as a pianist, organist and conductor. At this point the careers of the two sisters intertwine. Lili, who was born in 1893, showed musical talent at a remarkably young age, but ill health prevented her following her sister into the Conservatoire and instead she received private tuition. In 1912 she too entered for the Prix de Rome but was unsuccessful and made another attempt the following year. This time she won, the first woman to receive this prestigious award. She stayed on two separate occasions at the Villa Medici in Rome, one of the privileges for prize winners, but the second visit was cut short by deteriorating health and she returned to Paris where she spent the rest of her short life; she died in 1918. Nadia was greatly affected by her sister's death and ceased composing herself, always contending that Lili was the better composer. Instead, for the remainder of her life she devoted herself to performing and above all teaching; Ned Rorem called her "the most influential musical pedagogue in history." Today's three

songs by Lili Boulanger are from a 1914 collection titled *Clairières dans le ciel* (Clearings in the sky) based on poetry by Francis Jammes. Nadia Boulanger's *Mon coeur* and *Versailles* are both settings of poetry by Albert Samain, while the text of *Poème d'amour* is by Paul Armand Silvestre.

The songs in the last group are all from larger projects, the first three from song cycles, the fourth from an opera and the last from a children's educational entertainment. *Big Sister says, 1967* comes from *Love After 1950*, a cycle of songs by Libby Larsen to the poetry of Ann LaMott. The composer says of this song, it "could only be a honky-tonk and nothing else. It's impossible to separate the 'beauty school dropout' message of the poetry from one of America's great contributions to the keyboard, honky-tonk piano."

Washing her hair is part of a cycle that the composer Daron Hagen constructed from pieces he had written earlier in his career. The cycle was dedicated to the composer Ned Rorem on his 63rd birthday. The text of this song is by Sarah Gorham. For Russell Platt it has "a casual, conversational feel, but we are gradually made aware of illness, a family scene loving but tense."

Empty Chair is the first piece in a song cycle by the American composer, Jake Heggie to texts by Margaret Atwood. The composition of the cycle, with the title *Songs for Murdered Sisters*, was prompted by a Renfrew County crime now recognized as one of the worst domestic violence cases in Canadian history. One of the victims was Nathalie Warmerdam, the sister of Canadian baritone Joshua Hopkins, who initiated the commissioning of this music. The cycle was given its first performance in March 2022 at the Rothko Chapel in Houston.

Have peace, Jo is an aria from Mark Adamo's opera *Little Women*, based on the famous Louisa May Alcott novel. The aria occurs in Act 2 and is sung by the mortally ill Beth as she lies in her bed. Jo attempts to raise her spirits with talk of a trip to the seaside, but Beth urges Jo to accept her impending death.

When we Grow Up was Diana Ross's contribution to *Free to Be... You and Me*, a book and record project by Marlo Thomas aimed at children, with songs and stories performed by well-known celebrities and, according to one source, "saluting values such as individuality, tolerance, and comfort with one's identity."

-John Mayo